

Emergency Responder

WASHINGTON EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT DIVISION



WASHINGTON MILITARY DEPARTMENT

March-April 2001

EOC rides out quake and day one response

Engineered to withstand a thousand year earthquake, the Washington Emergency Management Division Headquarters (EMD) building proved its worth, as did all its players, when the earthquake hit at 10:54 a.m. on Feb. 28, 2001.

Built to a thousand-year standard means the building is designed for minimal damage and immediate occupancy during a major quake. In other words, no one is to evacuate and you immediately go to work, which is exactly what happened at EMD's headquarters considering it was only five miles from the epicenter.

The State Emergency Operations Center (EOC) was filled with staff conducting computer training and as the building started to shake, just like the drill, everyone automatically did Drop, Cover and Hold. Within minutes, the staff was up and began working. Some initial reactions were where was the epicenter?

Inside the EOC Alert and Warning Center at 11 a.m., only six minutes after the quake, Glen Woodbury, EMD director, issued the phase III order and the EOC was fully operational.

Using the National Warning System, the staff duty officers announced nationwide that Washington State had a major earthquake. The duty officers issued emergency instructions to local jurisdictions across the state on the status of the EOC and requests for information on: damage assessments, injuries, fatalities, and resources needed.

"In my 10 years as an emergency manager I have never seen anything like it," said Ken Parrish, EOC supervisor. "Everyone knew what to

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An access road at a Tumwater area mobile home park lies broken and cracked as a result of the earth movement from the magnitude 6.8 Nisqually Earthquake on Feb. 28. (Federal Emergency Management Agency photo)

Nisqually Earthquake recovery breaks state records; disaster payments exceed \$50 million

While many were relieved the state appeared to escape catastrophic damage in the Feb. 28 Nisqually Earthquake, the size and scope of the disaster mushroomed after the presidential disaster declaration on March 1.

The disaster area expanded from eight counties in the initial declaration to 20 counties by March 22, and to 24 counties by April 19. The disaster declaration area also included 25 Indian tribal governments.

"Hundreds of disaster assistance registrations flowed daily into the national teleregistration center after the presidential disaster declaration on March 1," said Diane Offord, state coordinating officer. "The registration influx also showed a wide extent of damage as registrations were received from individuals that were hundreds of miles from the quake's western Washington epicenter."

Registrations topped the 8,800 mark by March 15 and totaled 26,168

by April 30. State disaster officers projected the final registration total could reach 30,000—easily breaking Washington's record of 11,998 registrations set in the early 1996 flood disaster.

The heavy and sustained number of teleregistrations prompted the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to approve the state's request to extend from April 30 to May 31 the deadline to apply for individual disaster aid programs.

"The federal teleregistration system operated with few glitches. FEMA inspectors showed up within two or three days after individuals registered their damages. Quick processing work enabled the federal and state assistance programs to mail the first checks to recipients within a week following the disaster declaration," Offord said.

A major component of the individual disaster assistance has been chimney repair. FEMA

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Planning for fire, drought, energy emergencies underway at EMD

Preparations have been underway since January in Washington Emergency Management Division (EMD) to address a triple threat of drought, fire and energy shortages during the summer and fall of 2001.

"We can expect to be in an alert mode through the summer," said Ferruccio Crocetti, plans section supervisor in EMD's Plans, Exercise, Education and Training unit. "The crisis is not going to be over in the short term."

Because the drought, fire and energy issues are interrelated, an EMD task force has met since January to identify key issues, review the state's drought emergency planning, and coordinate information among program areas, explained Crocetti.

Crocetti said EMD began regular contacts with the emergency management community as well as with electrical utility companies, the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) and the state's energy office program. These contacts led to a tabletop exercise program at Camp Murray in January involving utilities, emergency managers, and BPA.

The EMD effort enabled it to easily join with Gov. Gary Locke's cabinet level drought committee and to carry out EMD's responsibilities under the governor's drought emergency declaration issued March 14.

The drought declaration also initiated the formation of a drought public information and education committee headed by the Department of Ecology. The committee provides overall state direction to inform the public about the drought, energy and wildfire situation. Besides EMD, other agencies represented on the panel include the governor's communications office; the state departments of Health, Agriculture, Fish and Wildlife, and Natural Resources; and state offices of Financial Management, Trade and Economic Development and Puget Sound Water Quality Authority.

EMD will continue to publish monthly updates for emergency managers through the remainder of 2001 to keep them abreast of actions within state government pertaining to the drought, wildfire, and energy situations, Crocetti said.

"I think we're up to date and ready to respond if it gets out of hand. The big thing is public education and public information—it's ongoing," he said.

Here is the April 2001 update from the EMD Plans Section:

Energy

Mountain snow pack is barely half of normal in the region. Flows on the Columbia River have been cut nearly in half. Limited electrical energy continues to be a major concern, as available water levels behind the dams are insufficient to support agriculture, power generation, and fish migrations.

The situation could become more urgent during the Energy Northwest/Columbia Generating Station's scheduled maintenance downtime between May 18 and June 18 to allow the reactor to be refueled. The drought conditions could cause greater impact during the coming wildfire season.

2001 Wildfire Season

This has been the driest winter in Washington since the 1976-1977 winter. The 2000-2001 winter is among the five driest winters in the past 100 years. Because of the overall dry conditions, May could have a high number of wildfires due to the relatively dry undergrowth. Spring rains may temporarily reduce the wildfire danger, but the bottom line is that 2001 has a high potential for a severe fire season.

Drought

The drought affects the entire state. Currently, the biggest impact of the drought is on reduced generating power capacity and on

farmers who heavily rely on irrigation water. Some irrigation districts in the Yakima Basin expect only 38 percent of the water they are normally entitled to, and it could dip as low as 6 percent. More than a quarter of the value of the state's agriculture is produced in this basin alone. A mid-April Department of Health survey of the state's 200 large water systems found that they were well prepared to keep water flowing throughout the drought this year, although a multi-year drought could pose greater difficulties. These systems provide water to more than two-thirds of Washington's residents.

For further information on the EMD drought, wildfire, and energy analysis, contact Ferruccio Crocetti, at (253) 512-7052.

EOC rides out quake and day one response

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efficient, smoothest activation considering the gravity and scope of the event."

State agency liaisons were notified immediately to report to the EOC, 12-hour shifts were established, and all staff were encouraged to try to contact their families.

Barbara Thurman, EMD's public education program coordinator, handled the initial 40 to 50 media calls coming in from all over, including CNN, BBC and Fox.

"There were three main things they wanted to know: the number of injuries, deaths, and damage amounts," said Thurman.

Within 45 minutes, Gov. Gary Locke and his staff were set up in the EMD policy room due to the evacuation and damage to the capitol campus. The governor's emergency declaration was drafted and signed within one hour of Locke's arrival. For three days, the governor ran the state from the EOC.

As Roger Heib, EMD Exercise/Education/Training Section supervisor concluded, "it was a good solid response" from the entire agency to a major emergency.

Recovery Update

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authorized one chimney replacement and strapping could be funded for each eligible residence under the Temporary Housing Minimal Repair “based on the need to assure the habitability and safety of damaged homes in the disaster area.”

By April 9, chimney repair payments reached \$12.4 million out of the \$20.8 million approved for disaster housing program payments. U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) through April 30 had approved 1,849 low-interest loans totaling \$25.8 million for homeowners, renters and businesses of all sizes.

“Homeowner earthquake insurance invariably carried deductibles equal to at least 10 percent of the value of the home, making many homeowners eligible for temporary housing repair grants or low-interest SBA loans,” explained Offord.

On March 15, the state estimated \$250 million in public facility damage may be eligible for federal disaster aid. The estimate would make the Nisqually Earthquake the state’s most expensive disaster, easily surpassing the record \$135 million in public infrastructure damage in the statewide flooding of early 1996.

Maj. Gen. Timothy J. Lowenberg, Washington Military Department director, cautioned legislators that public assistance eligible damage was only an initial estimate.

“More damage is likely to be found as specific repair projects are developed by state and local agencies over the next several weeks,” he said.

In a supplemental budget approved late in the regular legislative session, legislators approved a 50-50 cost share between state and local agencies for the 25 percent non-federal share of the public assistance aid.

By mid-April, kickoff meetings were underway for 253 potential public assistance applicants. Detailed scopes of work for small public assistance projects that cost



Larry Davis, Washington Emergency Management disaster reservist, surveys earthquake damage at a Port of Seattle facility in south Seattle. (Federal Emergency Management Agency photo)

less than \$50,600 are due within 60 days.

Public assistance projects will include measures to protect against future damage. “The goal is to rebuild more earthquake resistant communities through mitigation,” said Offord.

The Nisqually Earthquake’s public facility damage also will fund as much as \$41 million in hazard mitigation grants for public agencies, tribes and certain private, non-profit organizations across the state, according to Marty Best, state mitigation officer in the Washington Emergency Management Division.

The following is the outline of Nisqually Earthquake recovery

operations as of April 30:

- 26,168 residents have teleregistered for assistance.
- Disaster housing assistance totaling \$30.8 million has been paid to 16,225 applicants.
- Individual and Family Grants totaling \$1.65 million has been paid to 1,137 applicants.
- The U.S. Small Business Administration has disbursed \$25.8 million to 1,849 applicants.
- Potential public assistance applicants – 253.

Memories of the earthquake from Thurston County

*By Bette Shultz, Coordinator,
Thurston County Emergency
Management*

It was February 28, 2001, and it started out as a nice sunny day. Kathy Estes, coordinator, had asked me if I had received teletypes about a small earthquake in Central Washington that she had received a call about. I told her I didn't have it, so she called the dispatch center (9-1-1)

"...overall, Thurston County citizens should be proud and confident in the way in which Thurston County responded to the Nisqually earthquake. I know I am."

to ask if they had it. About 15 minutes later Jim McGuire, 9-1-1 Supervisor, came in my office and handed us the teletype.

Kathy and I proceeded to read the teletype and since it appeared to be of no concern to us, I said something stupid like "well, that's one we don't have to worry about" and guess what happened next? You guessed it—within 30 seconds the ground started its mighty shaking. I dove under my desk and since there wasn't room for both of us, Kathy headed for the doorway and we rode out the longest 45 seconds of our lives.

After it was over, we immediately started putting the EOC into activation mode. Qwest people were meeting with CAPCOM's people in the EOC. The Qwest people asked what they could do to help, so Kathy put them to work hooking up phones. Medic One and CAPCOM personnel came in to the EOC and asked what they could do to help, so we put them on the phones to start answering calls and setting up status boards. One of CAPCOM's staff did a sweep of the building to see if staff and equipment were OK. Glad to say all survived with the exception of a knee injury on the dispatch floor. Since it was almost noon, we sent

one person out for food. Past experience has proven that food has a big impact on how well the EOC functions.

While all this was going on, some of our EOC staff who work across town were already on their way to the EOC as well as a couple of County Commissioners, a County prosecutor, two PIOs and some of the County's department heads. The County's bridge inspection crews were already out in the field checking bridges and roads.

Within 45 minutes the EOC was fully staffed and responding to citizen, media and first response agencies' calls.

After a couple weeks, we held three debriefings and identified some things that need to be changed, but overall, Thurston County citizens should be proud and confident in the way in which Thurston County responded to the Nisqually earthquake. I know I am.

We are in the recovery phase now and still are identifying improvements to make, but we also feel very confident that our past planning was well worth the effort.

One thing that is ironic - Thurston County, the cities of Olympia, Lacey, Tumwater, Yelm, Tenino, and Bucoda, fire service and law enforcement representatives, the American Red Cross, Crisis Clinic, Volunteer Center, Food Bank, and other response agencies are going back to Virginia in May to participate in a FEMA-sponsored Integrated Emergency Management Course. The disaster d' jour for the training is an earthquake. Because of this earthquake we have learned a lot, but we look forward to enhancing our response and recovery knowledge and capabilities after the intense five days of training.

Kudos also go to Washington State Emergency Management and FEMA. Both are a great resource and support to our response and recovery efforts.

Preparedness, Mitigation, Response and Recovery are all a team effort. Emergency Management is a "team effort" and without coordination, cooperation and support, the team wouldn't work.

Thank you to everyone for your teamwork!



Thurston County EOC was buzzing with activity five hours after the earthquake. (Photos by Bette Shultz, Thurston County Emergency Management)

Earthquake recovery shuffles EMD staff

The Nisqually Earthquake has triggered a major reshuffle in the Washington Emergency Management Division (EMD) as the state begins to recover from its most costly disaster.

"We are looking at a joint federal-state Disaster Field Office (DFO) that could operate for months at its location in west Olympia's Westfield Mall," said Diane Offord, state coordinating officer. "Beyond that, we are anticipating a recovery program that could run three to five years."

Glen Woodbury, EMD director, said the division had shifted 16 permanent staff from the division's Camp Murray headquarters to the west Olympia DFO. To continue EMD's regular program operations, he said 10 temporary backfill appointments had been made as of mid-April.

EMD had added about another 50 people by mid-April in project and disaster reservist positions, primarily to serve as project engineers to oversee public assistance contracts.

"The timetable to move from preliminary damage assessments to detailed work plans is tight. With millions of dollars at stake, we must have the project staff to get reconstruction projects underway quickly and in compliance with federal regulations," Offord said.

She said the division also has transferred its individual assistance program staff to the disaster field office to oversee the disbursement of individual family grant awards and to assist FEMA with the administration of the temporary housing assistance.

"Individual assistance programs likely will set state records for both numbers and dollars disbursed. This requires daily scrutiny by individual assistance program staff to ensure that aid is promptly and accurately disbursed," she said.

Offord said the hazard mitigation grant program would have the challenge of overseeing the state-wide application process for



Duty Officer Dan Fox (lower left) explains emergency notification procedures to (l-r) Masahiro Shiomi, of the cabinet intelligence research office-Japan; Nobuo Narishima, director, situation center of the cabinet-Japan; Nobuyuki Yamamoto, consulate-general of Japan-Seattle; Hiroaki Tojo, assistant political affairs, consulate-general of Japan-Seattle; during a tour with Glen Woodbury, (far right), Washington Emergency Management Division director. (EMD photo by Colleen Roberts)

upwards of \$41 million in grant money.

"The April 30 application deadline for hazard mitigation grants only starts what will be a months-long process to review applications and then to award and oversee grants," Offord said.

The following is a rundown of disaster field office appointments and backfills as of mid-April:

- **Diane Offord** is state coordinating officer in the DFO. Her backfill as Programs Unit Manager is **Maillian Uphaus**. **Jeff Parsons** is Uphaus' backfill as Programs Section manager. **Valjean Merrill** is Parsons' backfill as planner in the Plans, Exercise, Education and Training unit.
- **Rob Harper** is the state public information officer at the DFO. His backfill as EMD public information officer is **Mark Clemens**. Clemens's backfill is **Colleen Roberts**, a temporary public information officer in the EMD headquarters.
- **Bruce Baardson** is the public assistance coordinator in the DFO. His backfill as E911 program coordinator is **Heike Syben**. **Teresa Lewis** is Syben's backfill as secretary supervisor in the E911 Unit. **Jenn Watson** will backfill

Lewis as secretary senior, and **Lynn Cypher** is a temporary receptionist to backfill Watson.

- **Deborah Wright** is the emergency management program coordinator - for individual assistance in the DFO. Her backfill as training secretary in the Plans, Exercise, Education and Training unit is **Sandy Bigelow**.

Other disaster field office appointments were: **Chuck Hagerhjelm**, alternate state coordinating officer (SCO); **Jim Schoonover**, temporary chief of staff disaster field office. **Marty Best**, deputy SCO - mitigation; **John Vollmer**, deputy SCO - individual assistance; **Donna Voss**, deputy SCO - public assistance; **Kurt Hardin**, senior coordinator - public assistance; **George Crawford**, senior program coordinator - policy analyst; **Jerry Jenson**, program coordinator (SCO); **Lorri Hergert**, temporary emergency management program coordinator - mitigation; **Sheryl Jardine**, temporary emergency management program coordinator - public assistance; and **Fran Cunningham**, emergency management program coordinator - public assistance.

2001 Session passes key EM legislation

Three important pieces of emergency management legislation have passed in the 2001 session. These are:

Public Disclosure

On April 19, Gov. Gary Locke signed SSB 5255 that will allow public agencies' records containing specific and unique vulnerability assessments or response plans intended to prevent or mitigate criminal acts of terrorism to be exempt from public inspection and copying, if the public release has a substantial likelihood of threatening public safety. It is effective 90 days after signing.

E911

Gov. Gary Locke signed SSB 5335 on April 27. It will provide flexibility in how state enhanced 911 funds may be used. The bill removes specific limitations on salary assistance and allows the state E-911 coordinator to enter into statewide agreements to improve the efficiency of 911 services. Funding eligibility rules would be based on specified priorities: 1) assuring that 911 is operational statewide; 2) assisting as necessary to assure counties can achieve a basic service level for 911 operations; and 3) assisting counties as practicable with capital investments necessary to increase 911 effectiveness. The bill takes effect next July 1.



More than 1,100 public buildings were damaged in the Nisqually earthquake. Considerable damage also occurred inside buildings when the earth tremors knocked computers, printers, and folders onto desks and floors. (State Department of Agriculture photo)

EMAC

SB 5256 awaits action by the governor after legislators approved the bill April 19. The measure would allow Washington to enter into emergency assistance compacts with other states. Currently, the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) includes 39 states and territories, including Idaho. EMAC includes provisions dealing with liability, expenses, reimbursements, and the recognition of state licenses and permits for professional and skilled laborers by the state with an emergency.

Personnel

Ute Weber became the Plans, Exercise, Education and Training Unit secretary April 16.

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